726 a few vestiges of his scattered troops and urged him to ask all his
648* neighbors for aid in order to make a supreme effort.
175* He addressed himself first to the king of Xieng-Mai, who gave him an out-and-out refusal. The king of Luang-Prabang offered him platonic consolation and a few officers whom he was never to receive. The emperor of Annam promised him an army, but without specifying any date or place of concentration. As for the king of Xieng-Khouang he preserved a prudent silence.

643* Chao-Noi, king of Xieng-Khouang. This latter, Chao-Noi, who
175* was to play a major role in the years which followed, has left the memory of a detestable prince. To be sure, he was confronted with a tragic situation and one fraught with difficulties which little by little caught him up in a close net from which he could not extricate himself, but he did nothing to force the hand of destiny and showed himself to be, if not cowardly, at least hesitant and without political sense at a time when events demanded decisiveness and courage.

He had succeeded, in 1791 at the age of twelve, his /171/ father Chao-Xieng who was a brother of Xom-Phou (1). He had soon freed

1. See above, p. 149,

/429/ himself from the guardianship of the counselor Phou-Ho-Xieng-Di whom the dignitaries of his kingdom had given him, and had at once manifested a brutal despotism towards his unhappy subjects whom he overburdened with taxes and vexations (repeated levies of first grade materials for the reconstruction of his palace, unjustified drafts of soldiers and continual abductions of children, for to expensive tastes he joined a passion for women).

/662/ Phou-Ho-Xieng-Di had dared to complain to King Anou, and the latter had summoned Chao-Noi to Vientiane, but there the clever fellow had charmed his suzerain with his talents as a horseman, by training a horse which was reputed to be unmanageable. He had returned to Xieng-Khouang laden with presents and honors and had lost no time in having his childhood mentor assassinated.

648* The results of the Siamese campaign of 1827 were not such as to
175* displease him, for hatred for Vientiane was a tradition in his family. At first he therefore turned a deaf ear to the appeals of the wandering king. In a second message, after Anou had called on him to fulfill his duties as a vassal, he announced that two thousand men were being sent, /172/ although he ordered them not to arrive "until after